**Addressing Student Connectedness at Moreau**

One of the focal points of an education at Moreau Catholic High School is the education of the whole student. Our strong focus on Academics is balanced with an emphasis on the spiritual, social, and cultural nourishment of our student body. To this end, we have been exploring the issue of student connectedness on campus, and are looking at new ways to increase students’ feeling of involvement and inclusion at school.

In recent months, we as a community have been inundated with the heartbreaking messages in the media about school bullying. The advent of new technologies such as social networking sites and text messaging in recent years has increased the trend towards “cyberbullying”, while more “traditional” forms of bullying such as physical and verbal attacks still remain prevalent in schools.

While here at Moreau Catholic we have a very positive and safe school environment, we still felt it important to start a conversation with our students both to assess where we are as school, and to help educate them on the importance of awareness and tolerance. To address the issue of school bullying, the Moreau community participated in Anti-Bullying Week November 15th-19th. The week started with members of our Diversity in Action club handing out purple ribbons, which students and faculty wore throughout the week in solidarity with those who feel marginalized or bullied. On Tuesday, a touching video put together by student government members Marissa Aquino and Mariel Dologmandin addressed the concept of school bullying and provided some great insight and information as to what constitutes bullying and how students can help stop it.

Halfway through the week, students participated in a forum during lunch, where an open discussion around bullying and harassment was moderated by senior Jennifer Rillamas. Several students participated in this discussion, which was supplemented by classroom discussion and activities around this subject matter as well. This student discussion was followed by a faculty forum to address how teachers can better address bullying in the classroom, and the week culminated with students and faculty wearing purple to school and signing a pledge to start “making a difference” in the Moreau community.

We are currently compiling survey results from our students to help guide future activities and discussions around student connectedness and bullying. One step that has already been secured is participating in the Day of Understanding program on February 1st. That day, we will have an all-school assembly with speaker Keith Hawkins, who will help us to address issues of cultural and social sensitivity, and will work with students on how to better connect with their peers. This assembly will be followed by an extensive leadership training with our Link Crew, student government, and Campus Ministry Team leaders. The training will help prepare our student leaders for leading future group discussions and activities. Follow-up discussions and activities will be planned for the second semester.